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## School Facilities Board Meets Statutory Deadline Deficiency Corrections Projects Awarded

(PHOENIX, AZ – July 1, 2003) The Arizona School Facilities Board (SFB) announced today that the majority of the state's school deficiency correction projects are under construction or complete, meeting the statutory June 30, 2003 deadline.

The Deficiency Corrections phase of the equity based Students FIRST law, passed in 1998, charged the SFB with adopting rules to establish minimum school facility guidelines. The SFB then assessed all of the state's public school district facilities to identify deficiencies, and provided the funds to correct the deficiencies within three years.

The Deficiency phase included 5,780 projects across the state, the majority dedicated to roofing, HVAC, electrical, fire alarms, and replacement space. Three hundred eight projects (308) in the Glendale Union, Mesa Unified and Tucson Unified School Districts have been delayed until FY 2005 as a result of the state's current financial position. The remainders of the projects were awarded by June 30, 2003 and all must be completed by June 30, 2004. "The SFB was given very tight deadlines to accomplish a huge amount of complex work. The SFB staff has accomplished wonders in exceptionally cost effective ways," said Board Member Brooks Keenan.

Arizona is one of the first states in the nation to address the condition of school facilities and develop a funding source to repair their schools. This program had an especially great impact on rural districts that were unable to afford the costs associated with school repair on their own. "Throughout the nation, many states have found it challenging to put in place equitable systems for districts to build and repair facilities," said Lorraine St. Germain, former Assistant Superintendent of the Indian-Oasis School District, "While the demands upon the SFB have been continuous since it's inception, the SFB has consistently allocated the resources to address the needs of rural districts such as ours."

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But, rural districts are certainly not the only ones who benefited from this program. Many districts that received significant repairs are located in the Phoenix-metro area. In a letter to the legislature, administrators in the Buckeye Valley Schools wrote: "Our students go to newer, more temperate, better-equipped classrooms than just about anybody else in the nation. Shouldn't that be something we're proud of, that, for once, our kids are getting the best?"

The Board's Executive Director Ed Boot commented that while this billion dollar program has been a great deal of work, it has also been very fulfilling and satisfying for the SFB staff working on this program. Boot said, "Daily we can see improvements to our state's schools, and we are creating a better learning environment for our nearly one million public school students. This is a legacy that we at the SFB can be very proud of."

The School Facilities Board currently forecasts that the total cost of this Deficiency Program will be \$1,284,000,000 which is \$10 million less than the original forecast of \$1,294,000,000. While this is only a .8% decrease in cost it is still \$10 million, and at this time every dollar saved is important to the state's budget.

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